

Message Text

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S E C R E T BONN 15248

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, BQG
SUBJECT: FURTHER INFORMATION ON FRG-GDR TALKS

REF: BONN 14738

1. A POLITICAL JOURNALIST HAS TOLD US THAT THE GDR HAS ALSO USED THE CHANNEL BETWEEN EAST BERLIN LAWYER VOGEL AND SPD LEADER WEHNER TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE FRG ON UP-COMING ISSUES.

2. ACCORDING TO THE JOURNALIST, VOGEL VISITED WEHNER AT THE LATTER'S VACATION RETREAT IN SWEDEN AND OFFERED CONCESSIONS IN THE AREA OF TRAVEL AND OTHER HUMANITARIAN BENEFITS IN EXCHANGE FOR WEST GERMAN CURRENCY. VOGEL REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE GDR WOULD BE PREPARED TO LOWER THE RETIREMENT AGE, PERHAPS TO THE 55-60 YEAR LEVEL, AND TO MAKE OTHER UNSPECIFIED CONCESSIONS ON SUCH MATTERS AS
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FAMILY REUNIONS, ETC.

3. THE PRICE TAG ON THE WHOLE PACKAGE WILL REPORTEDLY BE HIGH. FOR EXAMPLE, JUST ON THE LOWERING OF THE RETIRMENT AGE THE FRG WOULD BE EXPECTED TO PAY DM 150 MILLION PER YEAR IN STRAIGHT SUBSIDY, NOT THROUGH SUCH CONVENIENT COVER CHANNELS AS THE BUILDING OF THE HAMBURG

AUTOBAHN.

4. ACCORDING TO THE JOURNALIST, THE EAST GERMAN MOTIVATION IS PURELY AND SIMPLY DESIRE FOR FOREIGN EXCHANGE. HE SAID A SOVIET COMMUNIST PARTY REPRESENTATIVE HERE HAD TOLD HIM THAT THE EAST GERMAN DEBT TO WESTERN COUNTRIES WAS AT LEAST DM 15 BILLION AND PROBABLY HIGHER, A LEVEL THAT SERIOUSLY WORRIED THE SOVIET UNION BECAUSE OF ITS IMPLIED GREATER DEPENDENCE BY THE GDR ON THE WEST. THE JOURNALIST SAID THAT THE FRG HAD NOT DECIDED EITHER TO TAKE UP THE GDR OFFER OR EVEN WHETHER IT SHOULD DISCUSS IT SERIOUSLY. THE PRINCIPAL FRG CONCERN REPORTEDLY WAS THAT SUCH A LOWERING OF THE RETIREMENT AGE MIGHT CAUSE POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS INSIDE THE GDR.

5. WE ARE UNABLE TO EVALUATE THIS INFORMATION, WHICH GOES BEYOND THE BRIEFINGS FORMALLY PRESENTED TO US LAST WEEK (REFTEL). SINCE THE WEHNER-VOGEL CHANNEL IS AN ESTABLISHED MEANS OF FRG-GDR AND ONE THAT HAS OFTEN BEEN USED TO EXCHANGE PERSONS FOR CASH, WE ARE INCLINED TO GIVE THE REPORT AT LEAST SOME CREDENCE.

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